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THE
INFINITE IMPORTANCE
OF THE
OBEDIENCE OF FAITH.
By MR. BACKUS.



2nd ed. 1791

THE
IMPORTANCE
OF THE
OCCURRENCE OF FAITH
IN M. BACKUS

THE
INFINITE IMPORTANCE
OF THE
OBEDIENCE of FAITH,
AND OF A
Separation from the World,
OPENED AND DEMONSTRATED.

By ISAAC BACKUS,

PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN MIDDLEBOROUGH.

Purifying their Hearts by Faith.

Acts xv. 9.

*We have received Grace and Apostleship for Obedience to the Faith
among all Nations.*

Rom. i. 5.

If any Man love the World, the Love of the Father is not in him.

1 John, ii. 15.

SECOND EDITION, CORRECTED AND IMPROVED.

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MDCXCII.

THIS discourse was first published in 1767, the
year in which the law was made that brought
on the American war. It is now revised and correct-
ed, to hold up the living obedience of faith, as our only
way of deliverance and happiness.

Middleborough, Feb. 27, 1791.

THE
INFINITE IMPORTANCE
OF THE
OBEDIENCE OF FAITH.

JAMES II. 22.

*Seest thou how Faith wrought with his works, and
by works was faith made perfect.*

MANY have imagined that the apostles Paul and James, differed in sentiment about justifying faith; because the one says, A man is justified by faith without the deed of the law; and the other says, By works a man is justified, and not by faith only. But if we duly attend to the occasion and scope of their writings, it will pull down all such imaginations. For Paul was called to lay the foundation of Christianity among nations who were strangers to revelation and to the hope of the gospel; which hope is built upon the pure mercy of God, as revealed in his Son, and not upon any doings of the creature. And to fix these ideas in the mind is of infinite importance to every child of Adam. But after Christianity had become honorable among men, many professed to believe in Christ, who neglected obedience to his laws, and imagined that true faith and holy works could be separated. Therefore James was inspired to write unto the twelve tribes who were scattered abroad, and to call them to rejoice in the
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divers temptations which they fell into, to try their faith and patience, in prosperity or adversity, in view of the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them who love him. But he warns them against ever saying that God *enticed* any into sin; for all sin proceeds from the *lusts of men*. And to guard against all error, he says, Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures. James i. 1—18. So that James held to the doctrine of the entire depravity of human nature, and to regeneration and salvation by the sovereign grace of God, as much as Paul did. There was a sweet harmony between them; as will more fully appear, if we consider the nature of faith, the influence of it upon human conduct, and how it is made perfect by works.

I. What is faith? In the common affairs of life, faith is as easily understood as any word in language; but in religion, all arts have been made use of to render it as obscure and uncertain as possible. When it respects a report or testimony, faith is receiving what is reported or testified for truth; and when it relates to promises and covenants, it is verity and punctuality in the promiser, and trust and confidence in him or them to whom the promises are made. And an impartial and effectual execution of the laws, and submission and obedience thereto, is the faith of government. But how little of it is now seen in the world. When the Son of God was manifested in the flesh, his servants said, Who hath believed our report? Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing, by the word of
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of God. Rom. x. 16, 17. He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal, that God is true; for he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. John iii. 33—36. We are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe, to the saving of the soul. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness, that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he being dead, yet speaketh. Heb. x. 39. xi. 1—4. But Cain slew his brother, because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. 1 John iii. 12. And all that dwell upon the earth worship the beast, who received his power from the devil, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Rev. xiii. 4—8. From whence we may see the infinite importance of the obedience of faith.

Which leads us,

II. To consider the influence of faith upon human conduct. When God called Abraham out of Chaldea, he revealed to him, that a great nation should spring from him, who should inherit the land of Canaan, out of whom should come the king Messiah, in whom all the families of the earth should
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be blessed. And Abraham believed in the Lord, and he accounted it to him for righteousness. Yet after the promised child of Abraham was born, and had obtained a great share in his affections, God saw fit to try his faith, by saying, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I shall tell thee of. And Abraham was all obedience to the command, until God released him from the execution thereof, and said, Now know I that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. Gen. xii. 3. xv. 6. xxii. 1—12. But how could Abraham believe that a great nation, and the king Messiah, could spring from that son, if he was sacrificed upon the altar? Answer, He accounted that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. Heb. xi. 19. Seest thou how faith wrought with his works. He believed that God was always to be obeyed; and that the iron gates of death could not hinder the fulfilment of his promises. God gave him that son, when he and Sarah were as good as dead; therefore nothing was too hard to do, nor any favour too great to expect, in the way of obedience. Fear and love were united in his soul, which principles had been divided by the fall; and faith, hope and love, raised his heavenly mind above all the obstacles that fleshly reasonings, or infernal temptations could cast in his way. And they who are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise. Gal. iii. 7, 29. The believer views all the precepts of God to be true, and therefore to be obeyed; all his promises to be true, therefore he shall be supported; and he
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views eternal things as real and near, therefore to be regarded without delay. The serpent deceived our mother Eve, by representing the law of God as unreasonable, and the penalty of it as false; and by the same arts, the minds of many professed Christians have been *corrupted* from the *simplicity* that is in Christ. 2 Cor. xi. 3. By inventing a *duplicity* of meanings to the holy scriptures, men have *corrupted* themselves more than brute beasts, who know and obey their owners. Jude 4—10. Isai. i. 2, 3. Yea, they are two-fold more the children of hell than the Jews were, who were a generation of vipers. Matt. xxiii. 15, 33. For the Jews have a fixed regard for the law of Moses, and for the land of Canaan, where they yet hope for an earthly kingdom; but proselytes to revelation, who are not born again, have no fixed rule of conduct, nor any country that can set any bounds to their pride and love of money, which is the root of all evil. 1 Tim. vi. 3—10. But true believers understand our Lord, when he says, He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. John xiv. 21. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous. 1 John v. 3. We therefore come,

III. To consider how faith is made perfect by works. An inspired apostle says, Whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 1 John v. 4. As a living child, he grows in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 2 Peter iii. 18. For the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more

and more unto the perfect day. Prov. iv. 18. They who have the knowledge of the truth, yet form many wrong conclusions therefrom, which are corrected and removed by exercise and experience. Rebekah believed that her son Jacob was heir to the peculiar promise of God to their family; but her mistaken apprehensions caused her to move Jacob to deceive his father, in order to get the blessing; as if God needed any such methods to help him out with his promise. So far from it, that she and her son brought themselves into great perplexities thereby. And when Jacob was returning from a twenty years exile, none of his inventions could help him; therefore he said, O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children. He pleaded the promise of God, in the way of obedience to his precepts, and in so doing he obtained the name of *Israel*, which signifies, *A prince of the strong God*. Gen. xxxii. 9—28. In reference to which, Jesus said, *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile*. John i. 47. And Paul says, In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a *new creature*. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the *Israel of God*. Gal. vi. 15, 16. Faith carried the mind of Moses above all the allurements of Pharaoh's court, and
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above its terrors too ; though Egypt was then the richest, and the most powerful kingdom in all the world. Yet Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season ; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt ; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king ; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn, should touch them. Heb. xii. 24—28. Thus by works is faith made perfect. The believer *grows* up to the stature of a *perfect* man in Christ Jesus. Eph. iv. 13. Even so as to put away *childish things*. 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 11. Also by works the perfection of faith is *made manifest*. For Peter said, Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath *made* that same Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Acts ii. 36. That is, He hath *declared* him to be the Son of God with power. Rom. i. 4. True faith is a growing principle, and by its exercise the perfection of it is made known, and believers let their light shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their heavenly Father. Matt. v. 16. And though all evildoers hate the light, yet they will be constrained to glorify God in the day of visitation. 1 Peter ii. 12. And this view of the obedience of faith may teach us many lessons of great importance.

1. It may teach us the unreasonableness of all the objections of men, against the doctrine of sovereign grace in Jesus Christ. Many have represented, that the belief of free and certain salvation in him, makes men careless about their conduct in the

the world, and very injurious to true morality. Yea, not a few have said, "If I believed that doctrine, I would gratify my lusts as much as I pleased; and if I believed that my good works could not procure the favour of God, and eternal life, I would not do them." But such language may well remind us of the words of Solomon, who says, When he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool. Eccl. x. 3. For such men shew plainly, that they love themselves above God and their neighbours; and that the only restraint upon their lusts is fear of punishment, or some other selfish end. And therefore, under high pretences to *reason*, they often deal with *revelation*, as crafty politicians do with bills which are proposed for laws; namely, to endeavour to spy faults therein, and propose amendments, in order that such laws may be rejected at last. But before men even venture to *speakevil of the things which they know not*, let them reason about things which they do know, according to the above principles. Let one of them come out and say, "I have a very loving and faithful wife; and I keep her so by often threatening to divorce or forsake her; and I have no way to keep her in good order, but by ever holding her in *suspense* about my unshaken love to her. I have also a family of obedient children, and they are kept so by *terror*, and by always holding them in *doubt* about ever enjoying my inheritance." If men could not deceive others about their souls, any more than such reasonings would do about their bodies and families, they could not subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake, as many do. Titus i. 10, 11. God said, Two shall be one flesh; but

but he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. 1 Cor. vi. 16, 17. And the believer says to Christ, Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave. Cant. viii. 6.—How cruel then are all teachers, who represent assurance of the eternal love of God to the soul, as that which would make it careless about obedience to him! God says, I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant.—If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail; my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Psalm lxxxix. 3, 30—34. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure. 1 John iii. 2, 3. Therefore all men who imagine that assurance of our being the children of God, and heirs of eternal life, is injurious to the cause of holiness, or of human happiness, have not that exercise of faith which he requires. And this may teach us,

2. The reason why all sin is included in unbelief. For our Lord says, Every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. The Comforter will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness,

righteousness, and of judgment : of sin, because they believe not on me. John iii. 20, 21. xvi. 7—9. Jews and Gentiles are all under sin. God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. Rom. iii. 9. xi. 32. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female ; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus ; and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Gal. iii. 28, 29. The covenant of circumcision made a great difference between Jews and Greeks, bond and free, males and females ; but the Gospel removes all these distinctions, and opens a door for each sinner to come to God through his Son ; and all who do so are equally *heirs of promise*. Heb. vi. 17, 18. But the main of the natural children of Abraham, loved their lands, their oxen, and their wives, above the Son of God, and his Gospel feast ; and therefore he said, None of those men which were bidden, shall taste of my supper.—So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, *he cannot be my disciple*. Luke xiv. 15—27, 33. But men have been so far from believing this truth, that multitudes have imagined that they were made disciples of Christ, and heirs of the promises of the Gospel, without their own knowledge or choice. And they do not now believe, that intemperance will bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder ; nor that uncleanness is like lying down in the ocean, or upon the top of a mast. No, nor that the getting of treasures by a lying tongue, is a vanity tossed to and fro of them who seek death. Prov. xxi. 6. xxiii. 31—35. Instead of believing the word of truth, they bend their tongues like their bow for lies ; but they are not valiant for the truth upon the

the earth ; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the Lord.—They have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity. Jer. ix. 3, 5. Much use is made of the maxim, “Of two evils chuse the least ;” but how is it applied ? There is the evil of *sin*, and the evil of *affliction* ; the one is against God ; the other affects self ; and how often does self prevail ? Wealth, health, and friendship, are the dearest things in this world. Job spake well of God under the most surprizing loss of the two former of these ; but when friendship failed him, and rather increased his sorrows, he cursed the day of his birth. And after he had wearied himself and others, in vindicating his character, Elihu said to him, Take heed, regard not *iniquity* ; for this hast thou chosen rather than *affliction*. And God brought him to say, I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes. Job xxxvi. 21. xlii. 6. And they who lived by faith, chose to endure cruel mockings, scourgings, imprisonment, and death, rather than accept of deliverance in any sinful way. Heb. xi. 35—38. And from hence we may see,

III. The infinite importance of a *separation* of the church of Christ from the world. He says, Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers ; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? and what communion hath light with darkness ? and what concord hath Christ with Belial ? or what part hath he that believeth, with an infidel ? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols ? for ye are the temple of the living God ; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them ; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean

unclean thing ; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises (dearly beloved) let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2 Cor. vi. 14—18. vii. 1. Multitudes have been deceived with the pretence, that we are only required to separate from open infidels and idolators. But the Jews are more firm believers in revelation, and greater enemies to open idolatry, than any other men are, who are not born again. And the church of Rome are open idolators, and yet are as firm believers in revelation as any natural men are. It is also a certain fact, that putting baptism before a personal profession of faith in Christ, and holding a successive power in ministers to administer it, came from the church of Rome. She is the *mother of harlots*, and all churches who go after any *lovers* but Christ, for a temporal living, are guilty of *playing the harlot*. When the priests in Israel did so, God said, As troops of *robbers* wait for a man, so the company of priests *murder* in the way by consent ; for they commit *lewdness*. Hosea ii. 5. vi. 9. Christ is the only *door* into his church, and all teachers who do not come in by faith in him, are *thieves* and *robbers*. John x. 1—10. Suffering is unavoidable, in this sinful world ; but the command is, Let none of you suffer as a *murderer*, or as a *thief*, or as an evildoer, or as a *busybody* in other men's matters : Yet if any man suffer as a *Christian*, let him not be ashamed ; but let him glorify God on this behalf. 1 Peter iv. 15, 16. The word which is here translated *busybody*, means an *overseer*, and it is sometimes translated *bishop*. Therefore, after a glorious revival of religion in our land, fifty years ago,

ago, the ministers, both in the Massachusetts and in Connecticut, took the first of these verses to prove that it was one "of the greatest crimes," for any minister to preach the Gospel within any parish where another minister was settled, without his consent. They called it, "doing the office of a *bishop* in another's diocese."* From whence the church of England took encouragement, that they should get their religious scheme established in America; and they pursued the *bloody* design, until they forced us into a separation from them. Yet many ministers in America, who received their power to be supported *by force*, in the name of the king of Great-Britain, hold that power over the people to this day. They have exhorted rulers and people to venture their eternal all upon the truth of Christianity, while themselves refuse to trust it for a worldly living. And this deceit and cruelty is made use of by many, to require their ministers to go a warfare at their own charges; and if ministers inculcate the laws of Christ for their support, artful men will ruin their characters, if possible. Yea, as Christ was crucified between two thieves, even so is his cause now dealt with. All the villainies that have ever been acted under the name of Christianity, are cast as a reproach upon the pure laws of Christ; while the hypocrisy and infidelity of multitudes is recurred to, as a reason for continuing the use of force to support religious ministers. God says, A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold. Prov. xxii. 1. Now all the country are engaged to detect, and to hang

* Chauncy's Thoughts, 1743, p. 42, 43. Newhaven Confociation against Robbins, 1748, p. 43. My history, vol. 2, p. 153, 182.

hang men who rob others of silver or gold ; while multitudes will try every deceitful art to rob all of their good name, who fear and obey God above man. And when they have robbed them of their good name, they can also force away their money, for the support of deceitful teachers, and for other evil purposes. *Stealing the words of God*, is the worst kind of theft. Jer. xxiii. 30. This is done by claiming the *promises* of God, without obeying his *precepts*. The Jews who did so, were guilty of *stealing, adultery, and sacrileges*. Rom. ii. 21, 22. And how full is the world of these evils in our day ! Multitudes claim the promise of God to Abraham, without doing the works of Abraham. For God said, I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to *do justice and judgment* ; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him. Gen. xviii. 19. *He will*, and *they shall*, was the language of his first covenant with Abraham and his seed ; and *I will*, and *they shall*, is the language of his second covenant with them ; and he took away the first that he might establish the second. Heb. viii. 10, 13. x. 9. And this may teach us,

4. What the separation is, which believers are required to maintain. It is not any *carnal division* among mankind. So far from it, that the word of God says, Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things *honest* in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceable with all men. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another. Mark them which *cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned* ; and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their
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own belly ; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. Rom. xii. 17, 18. xiii. 8. xvi. 17, 18. *Their god is their belly, their glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.* Phil. iii. 19. *These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.* Jude 19. *Covetousness is idolatry.* Col. iii. 5. And when our Lord sent his Gospel into the wide field of the world, he knew that many would profess to believe in him, who would appear by their *fruits* to be children of the devil ; and also, that when the sword came into the hands of his servants, they would incline to use it, to root up such tares. But he said, Nay ; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. Mat. xiii. 24—30, 37—43. This he says of the world, while he says to his church, I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat.—Put away from among yourselves that wicked person. 1 Cor. v. 11—13. But by *confounding* church and world together, which is mystery Babylon, all these characters have been lawgivers and judges for the church of Christ. And now, *truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.* And the nations are rejoicing at the prospect of enjoying the honours and profits of religion, without being tormented with fears of future punishment. Rev. xi. 7—10. But God will yet repay fury to his enemies, and recompense to the ISLANDS. And he says to the Redeemer in Zion, *My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor*
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out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever. Isai. lix. 14—21. And from hence an inspired apostle proves, that the Jews will again be ingrafted into the church, by the word and Spirit of God, which will be *life from the dead.* Rom. xi. 15—27. Which scripture hath been often brought to prove, that the *natural* offspring of Christians are taken into the *covenant of grace* with them, without their own knowledge or choice; and also that souls who are truly converted, may yet *fall from grace* received, and perish forever. And innumerable evils have proceeded from the practice of setting every believer in the place of Abraham, instead of viewing him as an eminent type of Jesus Christ, the great head of the church. For Abraham had no right to circumcise any person who was not born in his house, until he had bought him as a *servant* with money. And his seed were to destroy all the inhabitants of Canaan, when their iniquity was *full.* Gen. xv. 16. xvii. 13, 14. And as Christian privileges are much greater than the Jews enjoyed, the nations who have professed the name of Christianity, have claimed a right to seize upon the lands of the heathen, and to destroy or enslave all men, as far as they could extend their sword. They have denied that God ever repealed his covenant with Abraham. Whereas circumcision was the shedding of human *blood.* And after Christ had purchased his people with his own *blood,* he said, Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping the commandments of God. Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the *servants* of men. 1 Cor. vii. 19, 23. Which is a full repeal of the covenant of *circumcision,* as he calls his covenant with Abraham. Acts vii. 8. Infant baptism never was

a commandment of God ; but it is a wicked invention of men, whereby they have held his church in bondage. His saints are his only temple here below ; and because the Jews rejected the *sacrifice* of Christ, God chose their delusions, and brought their fears upon them. *Isai. lxvi. 1—4. Acts vii. 48—53.* They said, If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him ; and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. Yet when a Roman governour would not condemn him for blasphemy, they accused him of high treason, and said, If thou let this man go, thou art not Cesar's friend.—We have no king but Cesar. *John xi. 48, xix. 12, 15.* And Cesar came and burnt their temple, and destroyed their nation, in a most terrible manner. They said, Crucify him, crucify him ; and the Romans crucified a great number of the Jews. The cause of their rage against Christ and his disciples, was the restraint which light and truth laid upon their consciences. But God said, Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing ? the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his *Anointed*, saying, Let us break their *bands* asunder, and cast away their *cords* from us. *Psaln ii. 1—3.* Upon which the disciples lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God which hast made Heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is ; who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things ? the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his *Christ*. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast *anointed*, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with

with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. Acts iv. 24—28. These things were all determined before by God, and yet were wickedly acted by men; which two things are now generally denied through the world. But let us learn,

5. How God is fulfilling his word, in the late events of his providence. After the Jews returned from Babylon, and began to build the temple at Jerusalem, some of their old men wept, because it appeared as nothing in their eyes, in comparison with Solomon's temple. But God said unto them, According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, *so my Spirit remaineth with you, fear ye not*: for thus saith the Lord of hosts, yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the Heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. Hag. ii. 5—7. And accordingly, the Son of God came into the second temple, and taught as no man ever did before. And after he had given himself a sacrifice for our sins, he ascended to Heaven, and gave the *Holy Ghost and fire*, whereby three thousand souls were *born in a day*. And all who were thus born, in every country, *As lively stones, were built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*. 1 Pet. ii. 5. He is our only High Priest; and every one of his children are a holy priesthood, who may come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Heb. iv. 15, 16. The mercy-seat was placed upon the ark, in which the law

law of God was kept whole. Deut. x. 5. And he said, There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims, which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel. Exod. xxv. 22. Therefore after Christ had ascended to Heaven, and given the Holy Spirit to his church, the apostle of the Gentiles said, See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from Heaven: whose voice then shook the earth; but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also Heaven. And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things which are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire. Heb. xii. 25—29.

His fire of truth and love, removed the national constitution of the Hebrew church, which was from Heaven, and it shook down all earthly kingdoms. And though the Gentiles introduced national schemes of religion, whereby the holy city of God hath been trodden under foot, ever since the beast arose out of the bottomless pit; yet when the seventh angel shall sound his trumpet, great voices will be heard in Heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.—And the temple of God was opened in Heaven,

Heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament; and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and great hail. Rev. x. 7. xi. 2, 15—19. Then it will be seen, that the only way of *mercy for sinners*, is by faith in Christ, in whom the two tables of the law are kept whole. For on the two commandments, of loving God with all our powers, and loving our neighbours as ourselves, hang all the law and the prophets. Matt. xxii. 36—40. This is that good part, which shall not be taken away from any who choose this law of love. Luke x. 25—28, 42. It is the circumcision of the heart, which delivers us from dogs, evil workers, and the concision. Rom. ii. 29. Phil. iii. 2, 3. It is the change which God requires of us, and which he hath promised to work in us. He said to the church of Israel, Circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked. And when they were scattered among all nations, he said, The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.—The word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. Deut. x. 16. xxx. 6—14. If any man have not the *Spirit of Christ*, he is none of his.—For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.—For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.—Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations. Rom. viii. 9. x. 4, 10. xiv. 1. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ; for

the Obedience of Faith.

for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are *complete* in him, which is the HEAD of all principality and power. In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. Col. ii. 8—12.

Yet in the second and third centuries, philosophy and vain deceit, carried teachers into the practice of setting up themselves as priests, in distinction from the brethren; and of setting up some teachers above others, under the name of bishops; with an imagination that they could regenerate persons by baptizing of them. And in the fourth century Constantine adopted this corrupt scheme, as an engine of state-policy. And in writing to each bishop, he styled him, "Your holiness." Which was so pleasing to them, that one of them went and delivered a long oration in the presence of Constantine, in the thirtieth year of his reign, wherein he said, "His empire resembleth the celestial empire, so that lifting up his eyes to Heaven, he governeth his subjects in this inferior empire, according to the pattern and form of the heavenly empire. For law, which is king of all, hath prescribed a Monarchy to be a government most suitable to a prince and people. For a Monarchy doth exceed all other kinds of commonwealths and manners of government; for that government is various which consisteth in an Aristocracy, or a government of men equal in riches and dignity; also a Democracy, or government of the people, which is opposed to a Monarchy, is rather a seditious confusion than a government."

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Yet he was never baptized until near his death; and then they said, "Constantine was the first of all the Emperors that was *regenerated* by the *new birth* of baptism, and that was signed with the sign of the *cross*." And when they buried him they said, "The priests and people, with tears and lamentations, prayed unto God for the Emperor's soul."*

From whence we may see, that enmity against a free government of the people, calling ministers priests, baptism regeneration, using the sign of the cross, and praying for the dead, were all as early as the use of secular force to support Christian ministers. And by removing the seat of the empire to Constantinople, and dividing it among his three sons, Constantine made way for the bishop of Rome to exalt himself above all men upon earth, and above the God of Heaven, who can never violate his promise or oath, or entice any into sin. 2 Theff. ii. 3—12. And on May 4, 1493, the year after America was first discovered, the Pope gave it to the crown of Spain. And though he soon after received a *deadly wound*, by the *sword of the Spirit*, yet that deadly wound was healed. Rev. xiii. 1—5, 11—18. For the *Protestant* beast hath carried blood and slavery round the world, in galleys and gallant ships, as far as the first beast ever did. And the two beasts of Britain and Spain, agreed last fall to divide the lands and trade of the heathen, on the other side of the world, between them. Yet the *spiritual tyranny*, which came from Rome and England, is continued in several of the United States of America. For when the freemen of the Massachusetts elected Delegates to frame a new constitution of government for us, they empowered

* Eusebius's Life of Constantine; London edition, 1663, p. 29, 71, 73, 96.

powered the majority in each corporation to force the rest to support such religious teachers as they were pleased to choose. And to justify it, they said, "As the happiness of a people, and the good order and preservation of civil government, essentially depend upon piety, religion, and morality; and as these cannot be generally diffused through a community, but by the institution of the public worship of God, and of public instructions in piety, religion, and morality: therefore, to promote their happiness, and to secure the good order and preservation of their government, the people of this Commonwealth have a right to invest their legislature with power to authorise and require, and the legislature shall, from time to time, authorise and require the several towns, parishes, precincts, and other bodies-politic, or religious societies, to make suitable provision, at their own expense, for the institution of the public worship of God, and for the maintenance of public *protestant* teachers of piety, religion, and morality, in all cases where such provision shall not be made voluntarily." But they set up the ministers of *congregational* churches, as the only ministers who should be overseers of the University at Cambridge. And both of these names were excluded from being a test of our civil rulers; but each of them must say, "I believe the Christian religion, and have a firm persuasion of its truth," when he enters into his office. If Roman catholics will say these words, they may be lawgivers and judges for us about the worship of God. And in 1782, the doctrine of *purgatory* was published in Boston. In 1783, the President of the University in Connecticut said to their legislature, "*Dominion* is founded in *property*; and resides where that is, whether in the hands of the few

or many.—The *congregational* and *presbyterian* denominations, however hitherto despised, will, by the blessing of Heaven, continue to hold the greatest figure in America; and, notwithstanding all the fruitless labours and exertions to proselyte us to other communions, become more numerous than the whole collective body of our fellow *protestants* in Europe,"† And on March 23, 1786, the legislature of the Massachusetts made a law, which gives each inhabitant the power of voting in town affairs, who pays two thirds more in one tax, than a poll tax. And it says, "That the freeholders, and other inhabitants in each respective town, qualified as aforesaid, at the annual meeting, for the choice of town officers, or at any other town meeting regularly warned, may grant and vote such sums of money, as they shall judge necessary for the settlement, maintenance and support of the ministry, schools, the poor, and other necessary charges, arising within the same town; to be assessed upon the polls and property within the same, as by law provided."

Here the majority of voters in each town are empowered to compel the rest to support such teachers as they are pleased to choose, without any regard to the faith of the Gospel. Indeed they are to be *protestant* teachers. But this name originated in Germany, twelve years after Luther began the reformation there; and above twenty thousand men were hired from thence, to assist the *protestants* in Britain, in their late *bloody* attempt to enslave America. And the *congregational* name was invented at Boston, where they hanged four persons, an hundred and thirty years ago, for opposing their *cruel* scheme. And our constitution says, "No subordination

† Election Sermon at Hartford, May 8, 1783, p. 8, 73.

subordination of any one sect or denomination to another, shall ever be established by law." And the men who framed it, said to the people, on March 2, 1780, "Your Delegates did not conceive themselves vested with power to set up one denomination of Christians above another; for Religion must at all times be a matter between God and individuals." So that the above law is a violation of a foundation principle of our government, and directly against the nature of religion. And *best* people, in our various towns, are daily exposed to the spoiling of goods or imprisonment, for refusing to undermine our government, and to violate their allegiance to our Lord Jesus Christ. For he is the only *lawgiver for his church*; and *every soul who will not bear him, shall be destroyed from among the people.* Acts iii. 22, 23. He was so far from giving any countenance to his church, in their violation of the work of civil rulers, that when he desired him to speak to his brother to divide the inheritance with him, Jesus said, *Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?* He knew that the way to avoid the *leaven of hypocrisy*, was to keep the government of his church distinct from the world. Luke xii. 1—14. Murder and lying came from the devil. John viii. 44. And from him came the power which has been claimed by the churches of Rome and England, to *divide* the lands and trade of America between them. Neither can the putting of baptism before a personal confession of faith in Christ, and supporting religious ministers by the sword of the magistrate, be traced up to any better source. The covenant of circumcision yoked believers and unbelievers together in the church of Israel, until Christ came and shed his blood for us. But the covenant of circum-

cision,

cision, and the covenant of grace, are as distinct in their nature, as Hagar and Sarah were in their condition, or as Sinai and Zion are in their situation. The *children* of the first were *born after the flesh*, while the *children* of the second are *born after the Spirit*; and *the promise* is to the children of the free woman. And Paul says, Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the *yoke of bondage*.—*A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*. Gal. iv. 21—31. v. 1, 9.

And this country is now so much leavened with hypocrisy, that our wisest men have excluded all religious tests from the government of these United States. And when great opposition was made thereto at Boston, three years ago, a noted congregational minister said, "The great object of *religion* being God supreme, and the seat of religion in man being the heart or conscience, that is, the reason God has given us, employed on our *moral* actions, in their most important consequences, as related to the tribunal of God, hence I infer, that God alone is the God of the conscience, and consequently, attempts to erect human tribunals for the consciences of men, are *impious* encroachments upon the prerogatives of God." All religious tests, imposed by men, are against *piety*, *religion*, and *morality*. Yet the same minister had said to our legislature, near ten years before, "Let the restraints of religion once be broken down, as they *infallibly* would be by leaving the subject of public worship to the humours of the multitude, and we might well defy all human wisdom and power to support and preserve order and government in the state." But as his *infallibility* has failed him, it is hoped that our civil rulers will soon leave the
government

government of the church to the laws and Spirit of Christ, and not believe any teachers, who will not *trust* him for a temporal living. For Jesus says, *If any man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* John xiv. 23. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God-speed; for he that biddeth him God-speed, is partaker of his evil deeds. 2 John 10, 11. Faithfulness in ministers and people to each other, and to avoid deceivers, are ever matters between God and individuals, as much as faith in Christ is for eternal salvation. AND LET GOD BE TRUE, BUT EVERY MAN A LIAR.

A M E N.



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AN ANSWER to Mr. WESLEY, on ELECTION and FINAL PERSEVERANCE, and a DISCOURSE on the LIBERAL SUPPORT of GOSPEL MINISTERS.